The Long Search for the Great South Land

Fighting superstition and the unknown, mariners in little ships roamed the oceans in search of the elusive southern continent of their dreams

The earliest on-the-spot drawing of the Australian landscape was made in 1770 when Lieutenant James Cook's ship was beached for repairs at the Endeavour River on the north-east coast of Queensland. This engraving was taken from the original drawing which was made by Sidney Parkinson, a draughtsman who served under Cook

In ancient times it was assumed that the world was flat. There seemed no reason to believe otherwise. Then some men began to wonder why, if you look at a mountain from the far side of a wide plain, you can see its peak but not its base, and why the mast of a ship at sea should be visible on the horizon before its hull.

From simple observations of this kind they deduced that the earth's surface must be curved and that as this curvature was constant the earth itself must be round.

But in the early Middle Ages for every enlightened round-world theorist there were a thousand sceptics. Indeed it went beyond scepticism, for conservative theologians argued that such a concept denied the truth of the Bible and was therefore not only incorrect but blasphemous. And even if the world was round it was surely impossible for anything to exist on the far side – for how could people walk upside down like flies on a ceiling and, since rain could hardly fall upwards, how could plants and trees grow?

In spite of ridicule and sometimes persecution the round-world theorists gained increasing support, and by the end of the 15th century only a few diehards continued to oppose them.

What lay on the far side of the globe was still, of course, anyone's guess. Almost certainly there must be land, and if so it must be approximately equal in size to that of the northern hemisphere; otherwise the world would never retain its balance.

So on maps of the period there began to appear vague outlines, depending upon the whim or imagination of the mapmaker, which were meant to represent the southern land mass. As most maps at this time were inscribed in Latin the great unknown south land eventually came to be known by its Latin equivalent, *Terra Australis Incognita*.

There was only one way to prove or disprove the existence of a southern continent, and that was to go out and find it. It was no easy job. Seamen's navigational instruments were rudimentary and their ships were not designed for long ocean voyages. But perhaps the greatest handicaps were superstitition and fear of the unknown. The closer a ship sailed towards the equator the hotter the weather became, and it stood to reason, seamen argued, that if you sailed far enough south you would eventually be roasted alive in a boiling sea.

By the 15th century Europe was doing a rich trade with China, India and other countries of the East in such things as silks, damasks, cottons, spices, gold, jewels, rice and sugar. These goods were carried overland along the great caravan routes to south and east Mediterranean ports, whence they were distributed in trading vessels to their various destinations. Merchants began to seek some cheaper and safer way of getting the goods to market.

They reasoned that unless Africa stretched right down to the South Pole there must be a southern end to it, around which ships could sail to India and other Eastern countries, and so avoid the dangers of bandits on the caravan routes and pirates in the Mediterranean. Whether Africa could in fact be rounded was, however, still gravely open to doubt.

The great maritime power of the day was Portugal, and the most enlightened man in Portugal was a younger son of the king, Prince Henry. Henry's passions were geography and cartography, and he, for one, had no doubt that a navigable passage existed around the southern tip of Africa. He gathered together from all over Europe the leading astronomers, map-makers, geographers, mathematicians, navigational theorists, instrument-makers, ship-builders and seamen, and he founded what was in effect the first school of nautical science in the Western world. Not without reason he has gone down in history as Henry the Navigator.

With Henry's encouragement Portuguese ships began to grope their way down the west African coast, first to Cape Bogador and then beyond to the Guinea coast, where a profitable trade was soon established in gold, ivory and slaves. Henry died in 1460, but his work went on. Much of the old superstitious fear of being roasted alive in the tropics or of ships being attacked and wrecked by huge, fearsome monsters had now gone. Seamen, finding that each mile they sailed southward beyond the equator brought them into cooler weather, became evermore venturesome.

Persistence had its reward in 1484 when a Portuguese captain named Bartholomew Diaz, having been blown farther south than any man before him, turned back and realised when he came in sight of land again that he had actually rounded the southern tip of Africa. He reported his achievement to the Portuguese court and he or his king named the turning point the Cape of Good Hope.

Thirteen years later another Portuguese, Vasco da Gama, rounded the Cape, sailed up the east African coast for a

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1 Discoverer of America, the Genoese seaman Christopher Columbus, set out in 1492 on what was to become the most momentous voyage in history. He left Spain with three ships; the *Nina*, the *Pinta* and the *Santa Maria*. He reached the Bahamas and Cuba but thought these were outlying regions of Asia

2 Ferdinand Magellan was sent by the Spanish crown to find a westward route to the East around the southern tip of South America. This is a 17th century impression of the straits which Magellan discovered in 1520

while, then turning east crossed the Indian Ocean to India. The dream of the merchants was realised, and a sea trade route to the East was open.

Meanwhile Portugal's great maritime rival, Spain, had not been idle. For years a Genoese seaman who lived in Spain, Christopher Columbus, had been expounding a theory that as the world was round Japan and China could be reached by sailing westward, a distance which he calculated optimistically to be only about 2,500 miles. In spite of awesome predictions that if he persisted in his crazy scheme he would reach the edge of the world and vanish into oblivion, he persuaded the Sovereigns of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella, to give him three ships. In 1492 he set out on what was to be the most momentous voyage in history.

Westward to the East

Its result was, of course, the discovery of America. But this was something Columbus never realised to the day of his death. He sailed along the north coast of Cuba and believed it to be China. He discovered Haiti and believed it to be Japan. On his third voyage he discovered the delta of the Orinoco River, South America, and concluded that it drained a hitherto unknown continent to the south of Asia, and on his fourth voyage he was convinced that China lay just beyond the isthmus of Panama.

Others, including Amerigo Vespucci, who followed Columbus soon discovered his errors, and it became clear that if a westward route to the Far East existed it could only be around the southern tip of South America.

In 1520 a Portuguese in the service of Spain, Ferdinand Magellan, set out with five small ships, "very old and patched", to test this possibility. In spite of fearsome storms, bitter cold, near-starvation and an understandably mutinous crew Magellan pressed on until his ships passed through the strait which now bears his name and so entered the Pacific.

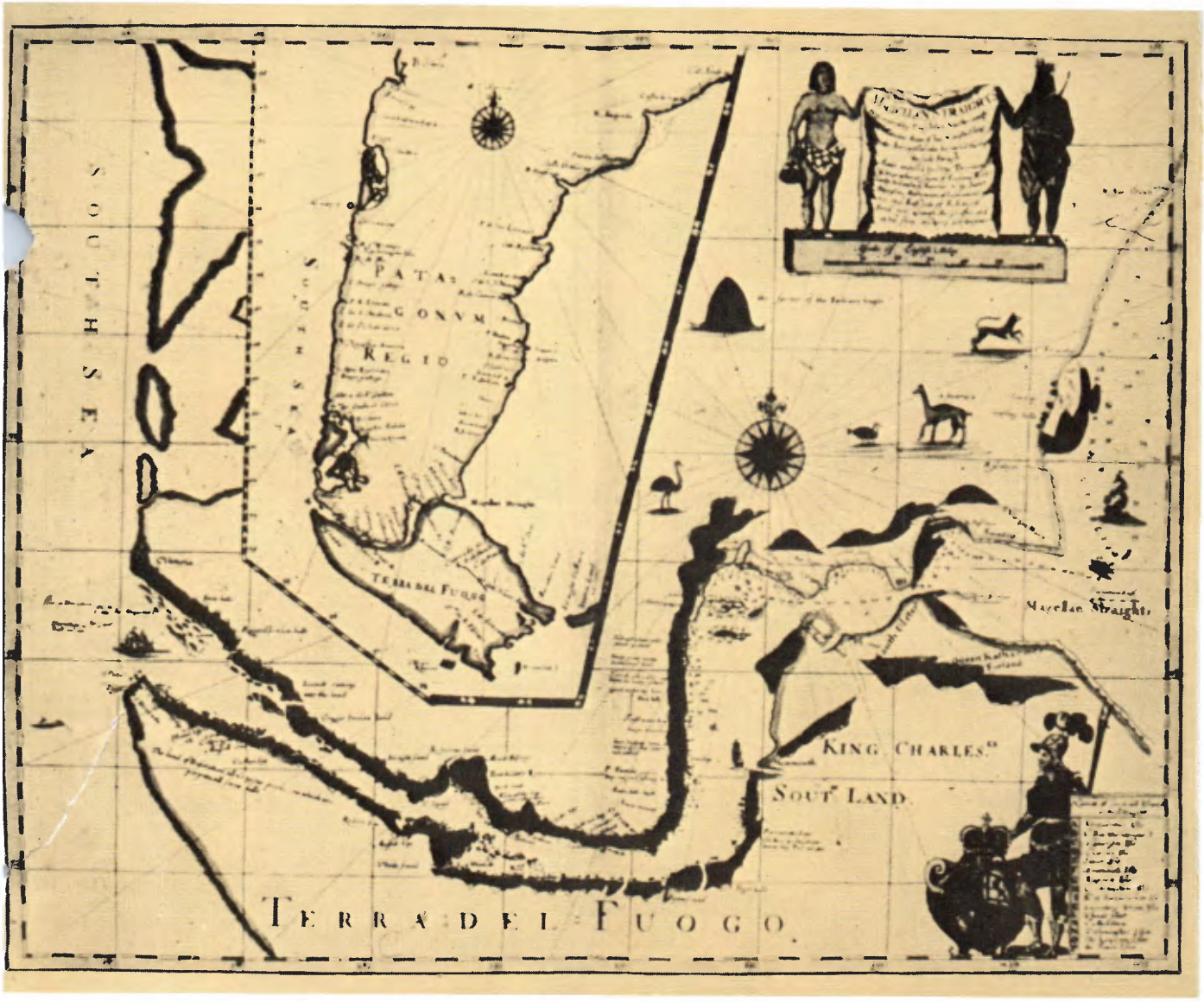
Had he continued westward he might have reached the east coast of Australia, but instead he turned north-west and eventually came to the Philippine Islands, where he was killed in an affray with the natives. Lacking a leader the expedition broke up, but one of the ships, the tiny *Vittoria*, sailed on to the Spice Islands, thence to Timor, only 400 miles from the north coast of Australia, and from there she continued on by way of the Cape of Good Hope to Spain – the first ship ever to sail around the world and thus to prove its roundness by actual demonstration.

The voyage had taken about three and a half years and it had cost 170 lives. It is hardly surprising that few other seamen had any desire to emulate the *Vittoria's* circumnavigating feat. Among these few were two Englishmen, Francis Drake and Thomas Cavendish. Both succeeded, and on their way home – Drake in 1580 and Cavendish eight years later – both passed south of Timor and were thus within perhaps 250 miles of Australia.

Portuguese power was supreme in the East Indies for about a century. Although there is no documentary proof that any Portuguese ships sighted Australia, there is evidence which could be interpreted as supporting the possibility.

In 1542 a map was published in France by a man named Rotz, and a copy was presented to Henry VIII of England. The map shows a continent which it calls "Jave le Grande" immediately to the south of the island of "Lytil Jave" and separated from it only by a wide river or a narrow strait. Some theorists claim to see a vague similarity between the shape of this continent and that of the northern half of Australia.

Again, in Gerhard Mercator's famous



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map of 1569 there is a land south of Java called Beach with an island nearby called Petan. These could probably be taken as representing Arnhem Land and Groote Eylandt.

In 1593 a Dutch geographer, Cornelius de Jode, published a geographical work entitled *Speculum Orbis Terrae*. In the illustrated frontispiece there is a strange animal carrying two young in a pouch, which could be accepted as an inexact representation of a kangaroo.

Finally another Dutchman, Cornelius Wytfliet, published a book in 1598 in which appeared the following passage: "The Australis Terra is the most southern of all lands, and is separated from New Guinea by a narrow strait. Its shores are hitherto but little known since after one voyage and another that route has been deserted and seldom is the country visited unless sailors are driven there by storms. The Australis Terra begins at about two or three degrees from the Equator, and is maintained by some to be of so great an extent that if it were thoroughly explored it would be regarded as a fifth part of the world".

Mendana pressed on

Wytfliet was right about Australia and New Guinea being separated by a strait but he was about 500 miles out in his location of the continent, for in fact the tip of Cape York is more than 10 degrees south of the Equator.

It seems fairly sure that if some unknown Portuguese seaman did visit Australia it was by chance rather than by design. On the other hand, there is documentary evidence that during the 16th century at least three expeditions set out from the Spanish colony of Peru, in South America, with the aim of finding the unknown southern continent.

The first expedition, comprising two ships under the command of Alvara de Mendana, a nephew of the Viceroy of Peru, sailed from Callao in 1567. It soon became apparent that the unknown continent was not where it was supposed to be. Mendana was an inexperienced and poor sailor but he was tenacious, and so he pressed on until, after several months at sea, he came to a large island which he called Santa Ysabel.

He found no continent but there were many other large islands in the area. So Mendana had a brigantine built of shallow draught for inshore work and six months were spent exploring them. Although his men found no trace of gold they were sure it must exist, and because of the stories they took home the islands became somehow identified with Ophir, the original site of King Soloman's legenday mines, and from then on were known as the Solomons. Had Mendana continued on another 900 miles or so south-west-

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ward he would have come to the east coast of Australia, but his ships were in no condition to go any farther. The way home was slow and arduous, and when the ships reached Callao, battered and almost falling apart, a third of their crews had died and most of the survivors were starving and weak from scurvy.

It was not until 26 years later that Mendana was able to organise a second expedition. This time the intention was to establish a permanent settlement on Santa Ysabel as a base from which to search for the southern continent.

In addition to seamen and soldiers the four ships carried many wives and children including Mendana's own wife, Dona Isabel de Barreto, who took command after Mendana – now in his fifties – had died on the island of Santa Cruz. The expedition proved a failure. Two of the four ships were lost. The one achievement was the discovery of a group of islands in

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Portuguese Information Office

1 The world as it looked to Gerhard Mercator. This map, devised by Gerhard and Rumbold, shows the vague outline of a vast southern continent, *Terra Australis.* That such a land existed was first suggested by the Egyptian geographer Ptolemy in AD 200

2 Sixty years before this map was drawn up, Portuguese sailors may have touched on the north-west coast of Australia. Portugal's primacy in exploration and discovery was due to the patronage of Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460) who sent carefully prepared expeditions down the west coast of Africa, hoping to open sea routes to Ethiopia and the Far East. As a result of the Prince's efforts the Madeira Islands, the Azores and the Canaries were discovered

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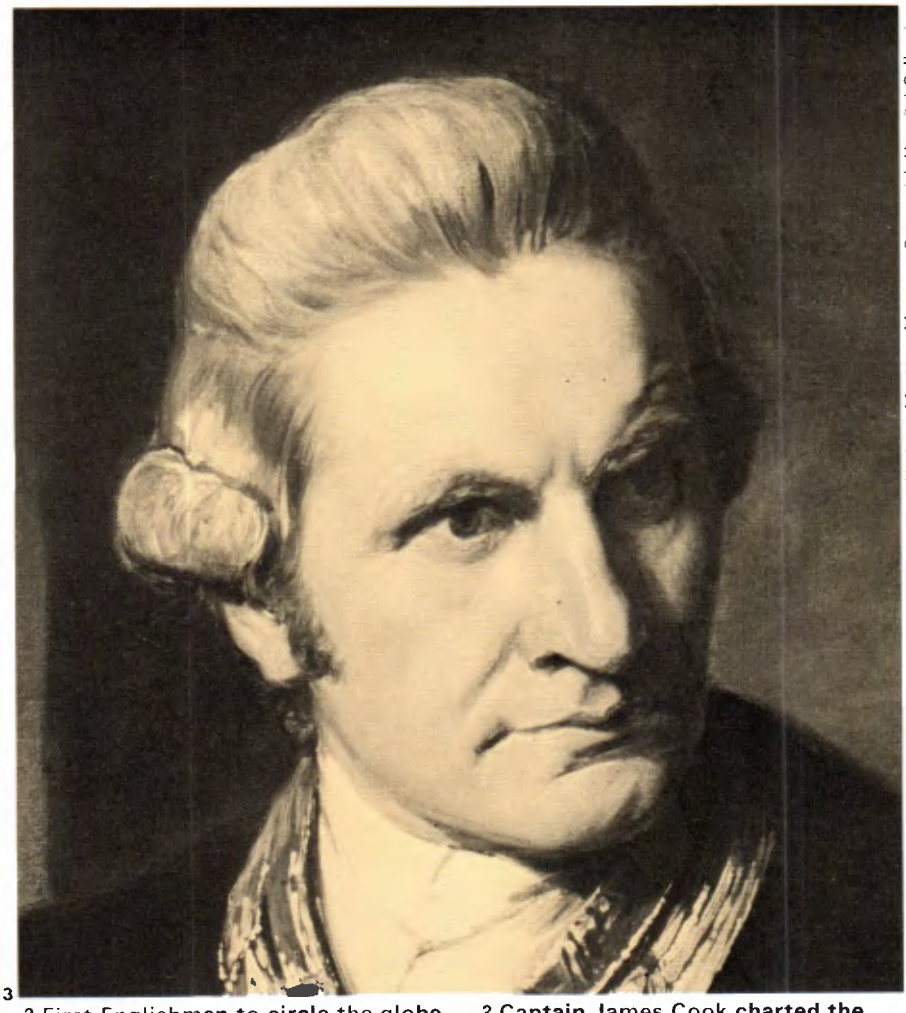

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich Hospital Collection

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***1* Vasco da Gama showed that the route to India lay round the Cape of Good Hope. His 1497-1499 journey was the crowning victory for Portuguese exploration**

***2* First Englishman to circle the globe was Sir Francis Drake in the *Golden Hind* (1572-1580). He awakened the enthusiasm of England for the exploration of new lands**

***3* Captain James Cook charted the Pacific Ocean from Canada to New Caledonia. By proving Australia was not an empty waste, he paved the way for British settlement**

the central Pacific, Las Marquesas de Mendoza, known today as the Marquesas.

The chief pilot on this abortive expedition had been a Portuguese named Pedro Fernandez de Quiros. He was a man of great piety, who longed to find new lands not for the riches they might yield but so that he might win their inhabitants over to the true faith. With two ships and a launch he sailed from Callao in December 1605. His own ship was the *Capitana;* the other, the *Almiranta*, was commanded by Luis Vaez de Torres, a blunt and very capable seaman.

Quiros had no gift for command, and officers and men were quarrelsome. So many of them wanted to sail so many different courses that Quiros tired of the constant squabbles and said: "Put the ships' heads where they like, for God will guide them as may be right".

After weeks of aimless sailing they came to land and anchored in a deep bay. Into this flowed a wide river with a range of mountains beyond. Quiros felt sure that with Divine guidance he had found the missing continent. He named it Austrialia del Espiritu Santo – Australia of the Holy Spirit – inserting an extra "i" in "Australia" as a gesture to the King of Spain who was also Archduke of Austria.

On its shores he planted crops and marked out what he dreamed would one day become a great city. Its name was to be New Jerusalem, and the river on the banks of which it was to stand was named the Jordan.

The land Quiros had discovered was not, of course, Australia but the island which is now known simply as Santo, one of the large group which Captain James Cook was to explore thoroughly 168 years later and name the New Hebrides.

Eventually the two ships, *Capitana* and *Almiranta*, became separated. Torres made a long search for his commander, Fernandez de Quiros, but found no sign of him and concluded rightly that his men had persuaded him to turn for home. Torres's own crew would gladly have done the same, but Torres had other ideas. He sailed south-west with the *Almiranta* and the launch, still hoping to find the real *Terra Australis*.

Dangerous straits

According to his own account he reached latitude 21° (the present town of Mackay, Queensland, is at 21° 10′); then, discouraged by the lack of land, he turned north with the idea of reaching the Spanish settlement in the Philippines by way of the north coast of New Guinea. Because of adverse winds, however, he failed to weather the eastern point of New Guinea and was left with no alternative but to coast along its unknown south side instead.

Very soon he found himself in some of the most dangerous waters in the world, studded with islands, sandbanks, shoals and reefs. It was only by a combination of good seamanship and good luck that he got through, progressing sometimes no more than 15 or 20 miles a day. But he did get through, and in doing so he established that New Guinea was an island and not, as most people thought at the time, the northern tip of the unknown southern continent. The passage is, of course, the one which separates New Guinea from Australia and it still bears his name – Torres Strait.

It is possible that, on his way through, Torres may have seen the tip of Cape York and mistaken it for an island, not realising he was so near a continent. But most modern historians doubt this. His probable route, they say, would have taken him about 27 miles north of Cape York, and at this distance it is most unlikely that he would have seen it.

Even if Torres did see Australia he was certainly not the first European to do so. On the available documentary evidence, that honour had fallen a few months earlier to a Dutch seaman, Willem Jansz.

The coming of the Dutch

The Dutch merchants were keen to break the Portuguese grip on trade with the East. While searching for new markets and routes they chanced upon a vast land to the south – and became the first Europeans to sight Australia

As Portuguese and Spanish seamen drew gradually closer to Australia during the 16th century in their search for the Great South Land much was happening in Europe.

This was the century of the Reformation, when religious persecution reached its most horrific height. Nowhere was this persecution more bitter than in Holland, at that time under the despotic rule of Phillip II of Spain. In 1566 the Dutch rose against their Catholic overlord and formed a republic, and for 30 years the Netherlands were bathed in blood.

The Dutch, essentially a seagoing people, were no match for the Spaniards on land, so whenever possible they fought them at sea and usually they won. In 1580 Phillip bolstered Spain's waning naval strength when he seized Portugal and forced Portuguese seamen and ships into his service.

The inevitable result was an alliance between the Dutch and the English, under Elizabeth I. In June 1588 Phillip sought to crush this alliance by sending a great invasion fleet of about 130 ships against England. Weeks later the remnants of this proud Armada, first mangled by the English and then shattered by storms, limped back home. The sea power of Spain no longer existed.

Dutch merchant adventurers were now free to sail where they chose. Not surprisingly their eyes turned eastward towards the rich markets of India, the East Indies and China, where the Portuguese had completely monopolised trade for nearly a century.

In 1595 a company of Amsterdam merchants equipped four ships for a trading voyage to the Spice Islands (now the Moluccas), under the command of a noted pilot, Cornelis de Houtman. This was so successful that whole fleets of Dutch ships followed, and in a remarkably short time the Portuguese grip on the East was broken.

The Dutch occupied the Cape of Good Hope and the Atlantic island of St Helena as supply islands and established a trading settlement at Batavia, now known as Djakarta, on the island of Java.

They traded in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf and ranged as far east as China and Japan. They established trading posts in India, conquered Ceylon and took possession of the Spice Islands and the Malayan port of Malacca. In 10 years their domination was complete.

In 1602 the Dutch East India Company was formed in Holland, and it was this rather than the home government which ruled the new Dutch possessions in the East. The company discouraged exploration for its own sake but it was very interested to find and exploit new sources of trade. It was with this end in view that the yacht *Duyfken* or "Little Dove," commanded by William Jansz, was sent from Bantam, in Java, in November 1605 to explore the south coast of New Guinea.

Only meagre information regarding the voyage survives. However, it is known that after coasting New Guinea for some distance the *Duyfken* came to what Jansz took to be a bight or wide bay. Here he turned south, passing some islands, until he again reached a long and unbroken coastline, which he followed for about 250 miles.

The country was barren and inhabited by "wild, cruel black savages" who

A painting by Jacob Cuyp of the great Dutch explorer Abel Tasman with his wife and child. Tasman joined the Dutch East India Company and proved to be an outstanding navigator and pilot

National Library of Australia

1 Discoveries by Tasman, Dampier and others are incorporated in this section of a world map published in 1705. Many geographers believed that New Zealand was part of the southern continent. It was Cook who proved them wrong
2 Dutch shipping in the harbour of Amsterdam at the height of the Netherlands' power in the 17th century

murdered some of his crew when they went ashore. Jansz saw no point in risking more lives, so he turned back at a point he called Cape Keerweer("Turn Again") and reached Bantam in Java, in 1606.

Jansz never realised that the supposed bight was in fact the strait dividing New Guinea and Australia and assumed, as others did, that the land beyond it was part of the New Guinea coast. We know now that it was the west coast of Cape York peninsula; and as far as authenticated records go the *Duyfken's* crew were the first Europeans to set foot on Australian soil.

Jansz's report was so adverse that the Dutch kept well away from the area, and after this brief lifting of the veil the country was not seen again for another 10 years.

A new route to the East

On their way out from Europe the Dutch practice was to follow the route of the Portuguese by sailing up the east coast of Africa to Madagascar and then turning east across the Indian Ocean. This took them through the searing heat and doldrums of the tropics, often becalming a ship for weeks while its crew suffered and died from scurvy.

In 1611 a captain named Hendrick Brouwer, who later became governor-general of the East Indies, tried an experiment. From the Cape of Good Hope he kept a course due east for about 3,000 miles and then turned sharply north for Batavia. By doing so he dodged the doldrums and had favourable winds all the way, and he reached Batavia in a record seven months out from Holland. The company was so impressed that in 1613 it instructed all its captains to follow Brouwer's route.

As the Cape and the west coast of Australia are only about 4,300 miles apart it was inevitable that someone would drift farther east than instructed and sight the mainland. The first known to have done so was Dirk Hartog in the *Eendracht*, which means "Concord". On October 25 1616 Hartog made landfall at what is now Shark Bay, about 450 miles north of Perth, and went ashore on a nearby island which still bears his name.

The Company was delighted. Captains would now have a definite landmark, a visible point at which to turn north. So amended orders were issued that in future they were to sail direct from the Cape to Eendracht Land, and then turn north to their destination. As a result many Dutch ships sighted the mainland in the next few years. It was a treacherous coast and wrecks were frequent, so most kept clear of it; but now and then a captain became curious and wanted to know more of this unexplored south land.

In 1619 Frederick Houtman came upon land a little south of present-day Fremantle. Houtman hoped to land but the surf was too strong, and after nine days he gave up and turned north. Some time later he saw land again, lying beyond a cluster of dangerous reefs which he called and are still known as Houtman's Abrolhos, a Portuguese word meaning "keep your eyes open". A few days later Houtman's two ships had reached the long stretch of land known as Eendracht Land. Although the coastline had been out of sight the whole time, Houtman assumed correctly that it was continuous and unbroken.

Three years later, in 1622, the *Leeuwin* ("Lioness") reached the coast at its southern extremity near the cape that now bears her name. Sailing north her captain kept land in sight for about 270 miles to a point beyond where Houtman had first seen it in 1619.

Thus in six years about 1,000 miles of the west Australian coastline had become known and some of it had even been charted in a crude fashion.

By this time the Dutch had learned of Torres's passage through Torres Strait, and in 1623 two yachts, the *Pera* and *Arnhem*, under the command of Jan Carstensz were sent to check the truth of this and to examine more closely the land seen by Jansz 17 years earlier.

There was an early disaster when the *Arnhem's* captain, Dirk Meliszoon, and eight of his crew went ashore and were killed by New Guinea natives.

After some hazardous navigation through reef-studded waters the ships reached Cape York peninsula near its northern tip and sailed southward for a fortnight, well beyond Jansz's Cape Keerweer to the estuary of a river which Carstensz named the Staaten. At this point the ships turned back and soon afterwards became separated. Carstensz doubled back on his own tracks, made another unsuccessful attempt to penetrate Torres Strait and then decided the task was impossible and returned to Amboina in the Moluccas.

Setbacks in the search

The *Arnhem*, taking a more direct course home, crossed the Gulf of Carpentaria (named by Carstensz after Pieter de Carpentier, governor-general of the East Indies) and came in sight of land near what is now Caledon Bay. The coastline was examined for a short distance after it had turned west, the newly-discovered area was called Arnhem Land, and the ship headed back for Amboina.

There were many other Dutch contacts with Australia in the next few years, the most important being that of the *Gulden Zeepaard* ("Golden Seahorse") which, on an outward voyage, reached the coast near Cape Leeuwin in January 1627. Out of curiosity her captain turned south instead of north and sailed for about 1,000 miles along the shore of the Great Australian Bight to a small archipelago, the main islands of which he named St Francis and St Peter. The coastline, with its high, deeply-eroded cliffs, was so barren that he saw no point in continuing further and turned back, naming

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the area Pieter Nuyt's Land after a high official of the company who was on board.

If the *Gulden Zeepaard* had continued on another 200 miles or so she would have reached the fertile coast of Spencer's Gulf, and no doubt the Dutch would have revised their extremely poor opinion of New Holland.

A year later the *Vyanen*, on her way home from Batavia, was driven south-eastward off her course by strong head-winds and went aground in the vicinity of what is now Port Hedland. She was refloated after much of her cargo had been jettisoned and continued down the coast, adding to the rapidly expanding map of the continent another strip of about 200 miles which her captain, Gerrit de Witt, named after himself.

In 1636 Anthony van Diemen was appointed governor-general of the Dutch East Indies. He was a man of great curiosity. In particular he wondered whether the Gulf of Carpentaria might actually be the northern end of a sea which reached south to Nuyt's Land, thus dividing the continent into two. Within three months of assuming office he sent one of his captains, Gerrit Tomaz Pool, from Banda with two yachts, the *Klyn Amsterdam* and the *Wezel*, to check this.

On the New Guinea coast, near where the same thing had happened 13 years earlier, a party went ashore and Pool himself and three others were murdered by natives. Despite this setback his supercargo, Pieter Pieterszoon, decided to continue the voyage. But the season was against him. In the Gulf of Carpentaria the ships were driven off course by strong winds until they reached Arnhem Land where they continued westward for about 120 miles. All attempts to double back were frustrated by adverse winds, so Pieterszoon gave up and returned home.

Van Diemen was disappointed by this failure. He realised that if voyages of discovery were to succeed they must be carefully planned and carried out by men of outstanding ability. He waited for six years, and then the right man appeared. His name was Abel Janszoon Tasman.

Tasman, born in 1603 in a village in Friesland, northern Holland, had already distinguished himself in the company's service. In two years he had risen from seaman to captain; and from 1634 on he had proved his outstanding skill as a navigator many times over before van Diemen decided, eight years later, to appoint him in charge of a voyage of exploration and discovery.

Tasman discovers new lands

The object of the voyage was to discover new lands which may offer trading possibilities and to find a more convenient route than was then known between the East Indies and South America. Although Tasman was in command he was required to make all major decisions in council with his officers, which was the Dutch custom of the day.

The expedition, comprising two ships, the *Heemskirk* and *Zeehaen*, sailed from Batavia on August 14 1642. After a stop at Mauritius to take on stores the ships headed south and then east driven along hard by the "roaring forties". On November 24 land was sighted, which Tasman later named Van Diemen's Land and is now Tasmania.

Unsure whether what he had discovered was part of New Holland or just another island Tasman turned south, rounded the south coast, and then sailed up to the east coast as far as Storm Bay. A party sent ashore for wood and water heard voices and a sound "like that of a trumpet or a little gong", but the natives were shy and kept out of sight. Animal tracks like those of a tiger were seen, and it was noted that several large trees had steps about five feet apart cut into their trunks, from which Tasman deduced that the natives must be very tall.

Soon afterwards the ships anchored in another bay, a bit farther along the coast. Rough weather prevented Tasman from landing, but a carpenter named Pieter Jacobsz swam ashore through the surf and planted a Dutch flag on Tasmanian soil.

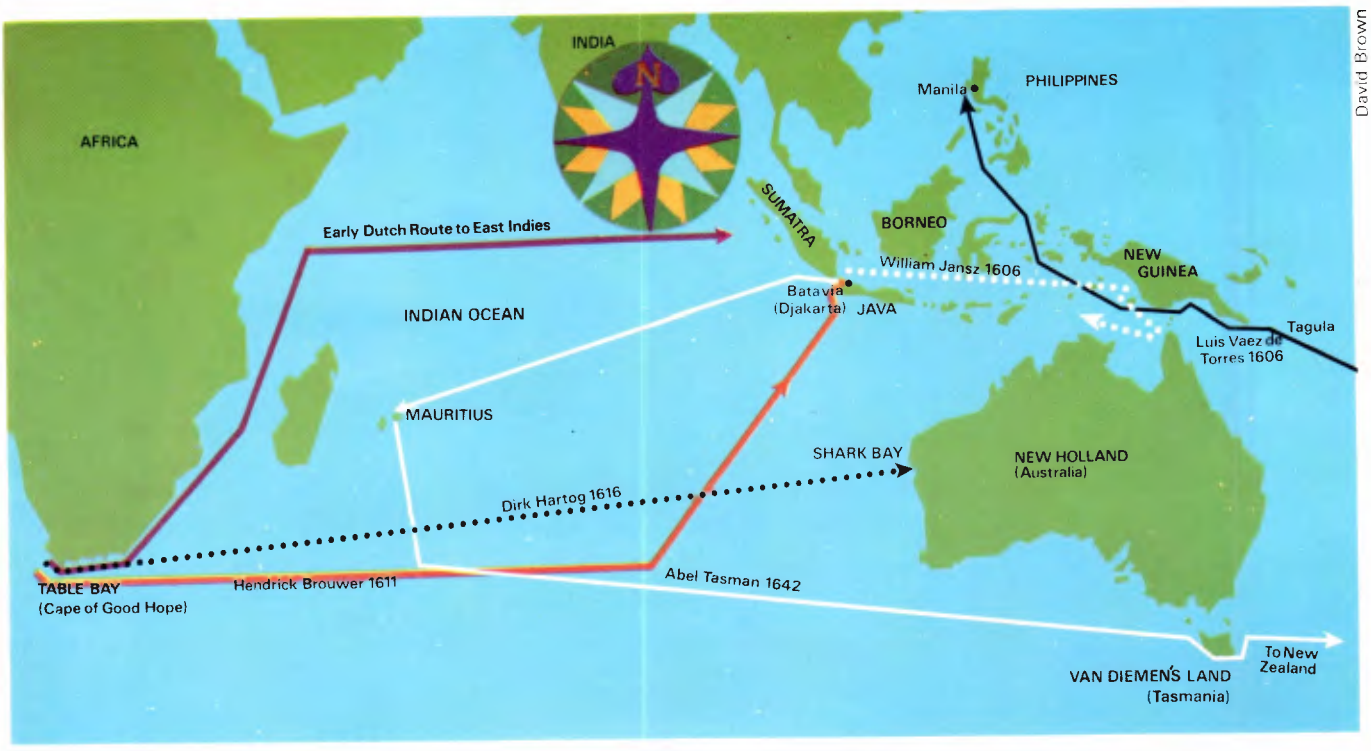
Had Tasman continued on he would eventually have crossed Bass Strait and reached the east coast of New Holland somewhere near where Lieutenant James Cook was to make landfall 128 years later. But instead he turned east, crossed the present Tasman Sea, and after nine days reached an unknown coast which we now know to be the south island of New Zealand. A sheltered bay was found and soon after the ships had anchored they were surrounded by hostile Maoris in war canoes. A boat containing some of the crew of the *Zeehaen* was rammed, four men were killed and the others had to swim for their lives. Shocked by this unprovoked assault Tasman and his people fled, calling the place Murderers' Bay, but on modern maps it has been changed, understandably perhaps, to Golden Bay.

Shortly afterwards the ships passed what Tasman and his officers took to be a deep bight, but which, as Cook proved many years later, was actually a strait separating the two main islands of New Zealand. Crossing to the north island Tasman sailed up its coast to its northern extremity, which he called Cape Maria van Diemen after the governor-general's wife, and then he turned his ships north-west into the open Pacific.

Until this time the existence of New Zealand had never been suspected. Some years earlier a Dutch captain had seen land beyond the southern tip of South America, and assuming it to be part of an unknown continent he had called it Staaten Land. Tasman's guess was that the land he had discovered was part of the same continent, so he gave it the same name. Soon afterwards it was found that Staaten Land was merely an island, so the country Tasman had found was renamed Nieuw Zeelandt (The New Land of the Sea).

In the Pacific Tasman searched for and failed to find the Solomon Islands, but found instead a group which Cook was later to call the Friendly Islands.

The islanders were charming and hospitable, and Tasman and his men spent



David Brown

The Dutch discover New Holland. In an effort to escape the doldrums of the Indian Ocean, Hendrick Brouwer, in 1611, discovered a new route from the Cape of Good Hope to the East Indies. Dirk Hartog overshot this route and in 1616 he became the first European to sight the west coast of Australia. Ten years earlier, William Jansz made his historic voyage to the northern coast thinking this was a great bight joining New Holland to Asia. A few months later Torres proved the bight was actually a strait dividing Australia and New Guinea. In 1642 Abel Tasman discovered Van Diemen's Land and continuing east reached the coast of New Zealand

10 happy days ashore, gorging themselves on fruit, fish, pigs and poultry. From here the ships continued north, past what are now New Ireland and New Britain, and then along the north coast of New Guinea to Batavia which was reached on June 15 1643 after a voyage of about 10 months.

The Company was not pleased. Although Tasman had discovered two new and apparently fertile countries he had learned little about them and had not carried out his orders "to make landings and pursue discreet inquiries about the possibility of trade". The expedition had cost a lot of money and had produced nothing profitable in return.

Even so, van Diemen retained his faith in Tasman, and in 1644 he persuaded the Company to finance another voyage to follow up the discoveries of the first and to make some new ones. This time Tasman was given three ships. Unfortunately no journal of the voyage has been found, but his route is revealed in surviving charts. Apparently he tried and failed to get through Torres Strait from west to east. So instead he sailed round the Gulf of Carpentaria and then around Arnhem Land and so down the long stretch of coast as far as North-West Cape, and returned to Batavia.

Two results of his voyage were to add to the map more than 2,000 miles of hitherto unknown or little-known coastline and to dispose of the theory that the continent was bisected by a sea running south from the Gulf of Carpentaria. Van Diemen was delighted, but again the Company felt that a lot of money had been spent to no practical purpose. A sharp reprimand was sent from Holland to the governor-general but, perhaps as well for him, he died before it reached him. Tasman stayed on in Batavia, became a wealthy merchant, and died in 1659.

Explorers follow Tasman

Historians are still divided on the question of Tasman's achievement. Some say he should have made a greater effort to learn more about Tasmania and New Zealand, some that he should have continued north from Tasmania and explored the east coast of the mainland. Some claim that if he had been a really skilled navigator he would surely have found a way through Torres Strait. On the other hand, his defenders point out that he always had to submit to the decisions of his officers, and claim that if he had been allowed to make decisions alone and act on his own initiative it would have been a very different story.

In 1696 a Dutch captain, Willem de Vlamingh left Holland for Batavia with three ships, with orders to search on his way for a Dutch ship that had been wrecked off New Holland some years earlier. He reached the coast of Rottnest Island opposite modern Fremantle, anchored in the lee of the island, and went ashore on the mainland with a large party. During three days ashore Vlamingh and a smaller party rowed about 40 miles up an imposing river which teemed with black swans. Three were caught alive and taken to Batavia, and Vlamingh called the place the Black Swan River.

Meanwhile in England, William Dampier, a pirate famous for his travels and writings who had already once visited the north west coast of New Holland, persuaded the government to give him a ship, the *Roebuck*. In this he hoped to discover and explore the east coast of New Holland.

He reached the mainland coast on August 1 1699 near Hartog's original landfall and the *Roebuck* anchored in a deep gulf which Dampier called Shark Bay. His second impression of the place was no better than his first. It was desert country, sparsely vegetated and devoid of food or water.

Had Dampier turned south he would almost certainly have rediscovered Vlamingh's Black Swan River; instead he turned north for about 1,000 miles and he landed near where he had gone ashore on his first visit. Here some fresh water was found, but little else. The natives seemed just as repulsive as Dampier had remembered them, with, as he wrote, "the most unpleasant looks and worst features of any people that ever I saw". There was a brief skirmish in which one was shot and a member of the *Roebuck's* crew was wounded by a spear.

On one occasion Dampier saw an animal which he described as "a sort of raccoon, different from that of the West Indies chiefly as to the legs, for these have very short forelegs, but go jumping on them". Clearly he meant that the animal jumped on its hind legs, and it seems obvious that he was describing a kangaroo.

Dampier failed to reach the east coast of Australia, but he did discover the strait between New Britain and New Guinea. But his report on New Holland effectively killed all interest in the place. It was the land that nobody wanted, and for another 70 years it was to remain unsought and virtually unseen.

Dampier – the first Englishman in Australia

The pirate Dampier stirred England with his voyages and wild exploits across the world. On one of his buccaneering adventures his ship was blown south on to Australian shores

Historically the main claim to fame of William Dampier is that he was the first Englishman on record to have set foot on Australian soil. Apart from this distinction he was not a great explorer. He discovered little that the Dutch had not found before him, and his main mission, to examine the unknown east coast of Australia, was a complete failure.

He was, however, an amazingly colourful character – a noted buccaneer, a great seaman and navigator, and the first man to sail around the world three times. He was also a careful and curious observer of the exotic native races and fauna and flora he met during his travels, and of winds, tides and currents and other natural phenomena.

Although a man of limited education, he was a master of simple, lucid prose, and his best-selling accounts of his voyages did much to focus attention on the vast and little-known Pacific.

He was born in a house in East Coker, Somerset, and was baptised on September 5 1652. His father, a small tenant farmer, died when he was seven and his education was paid for by the village squire, Colonel William Helyar. While he was still at school, his mother died leaving William and three other sons.

Young William grew up with a burning desire to see the world. At 18, as a ship's apprentice, he made voyages to France and Newfoundland, and then sailed to Java on an East Indiaman. When war broke out with the Dutch in 1672, he joined the Navy aboard the *Royal Prince*, was wounded in battle and spent some time in hospital recovering.

In 1674 he went to Jamaica as agent to Colonel Helyar, who owned a sugar plantation there, but he soon left and joined a ship bound for the Bay of Campeachy, off Honduras, where there was a profitable trade in logwood and dyewood.

Here Dampier came in contact with many privateers and pirates, who were very active in the West Indies. He went into business as a store-keeper, but lost everything in a hurricane in 1676 and had to work his passage home to England. Meaning to settle down, he bought some land in Dorset and got married.

But he was soon as restless as ever and in 1679 he returned to the West Indies. On a trading voyage to the Mosquito Coast his ship encountered a fleet of nine privateers, the captains of which were planning to attack the Spanish port of Porto Bello. Dampier and the ship's crew deserted to join the venture.

The attack on Porto Bello was successful but not very profitable and Dampier's share of the loot was only £40. Hoping for better pickings, about 330 of the buccaneers, including Dampier, marched across the isthmus to attack Panama City. They captured a large Spanish ship which they renamed the *Trinity*, but the attack on Panama City failed.

For a long while, with Bartholomew Sharp as their leader, they marauded up and down the west coast of South America. But they had little success, for Sharp was not a good tactician and the Spaniards, usually warned well in advance, were able to remove their valuables before the buccaneers attacked.

Struggle for survival

Christmas was spent on an uninhabited island, and after a wild carousel Sharp was deposed in favour of John Watling. Soon afterwards, however, Watling was killed in an attack on the port of Arica, and Sharp was restored as leader.

Rather than serve under him again, however, Dampier and 43 others, including a young surgeon named Lionel Wafer, set out in three open boats on a 600-mile voyage back to the isthmus which they planned to cross, hoping to pick up a friendly ship on the far side.

The actual crossing was long, arduous and dangerous. Indian trails were followed whenever possible, but often they had to hack their way through thick, steaming jungle. It rained incessantly and innumerable rivers had to be swum.

On the sixth day Wafer injured his knee when some gunpowder accidentally exploded and, after limping along in agony for another five days, he could go no farther. It had been agreed that anyone who fell out should be shot rather than be allowed to fall into the hands of the Spaniards. But Wafer and two men who had fever were luckily taken in by friendly Indians, who fed and looked after them for four months.

Meanwhile Dampier and the others struggled on for another 12 days through jungles, across rivers and over mountain ranges. When they eventually reached the Caribbean side of the continent, they were limping, starving and so weak that they could barely stand up. They were lucky enough to find a privateer and Dampier was still aboard when his friend Wafer eventually turned up.

Some time later Dampier joined another gang of buccaneers. Near Sierra Leone they captured a Danish ship which they renamed *Bachelor's Delight*, and in this they sailed into the Pacific. Off the South American coast they joined forces with other privateers, among whom was Captain Charles Swan in the *Cygnet*.

For more than a year this considerable force sailed up and down the coast harassing Spanish shipping and raiding Spanish towns. It was an exciting and dangerous life, but the rewards were not very great. Eventually Dampier and Swan tired of it. They joined forces and left the others, and in March 1686 they sailed from the Mexican coast bound for the Philippines in the Pacific.

With good weather and a steady trade wind they logged 7,323 miles in the remarkably short time of 51 days. Even so, they had set off so poorly provisioned that the daily ration had been reduced to half a pint of maize. Only three days' supply remained when they sighted the island of Guam in what are now the Marianas. And as a last resort, so Dampier learned, the crew had decided to kill and eat their officers. When he told Swan the captain remarked "Ah! Dampier, you would have made them but a poor meal", for, as Dampier explained, "I was as lean as the captain was lusty and fleshy".

The natives and the Spanish garrison at Guam were surprisingly friendly, and the buccaneers stayed long enough to recover from their weeks of hunger. It was there that Dampier first saw and ate breadfruit, and his description of it is as accurate and valid as any written during the next 150 years.

"The Bread-fruit grows on a large Tree, as big and high as our largest Appletrees", he wrote. "The Fruit grows on the Boughs like Apples; it is as big as a Penny loaf, when Wheat is at five shillings the Bushel.

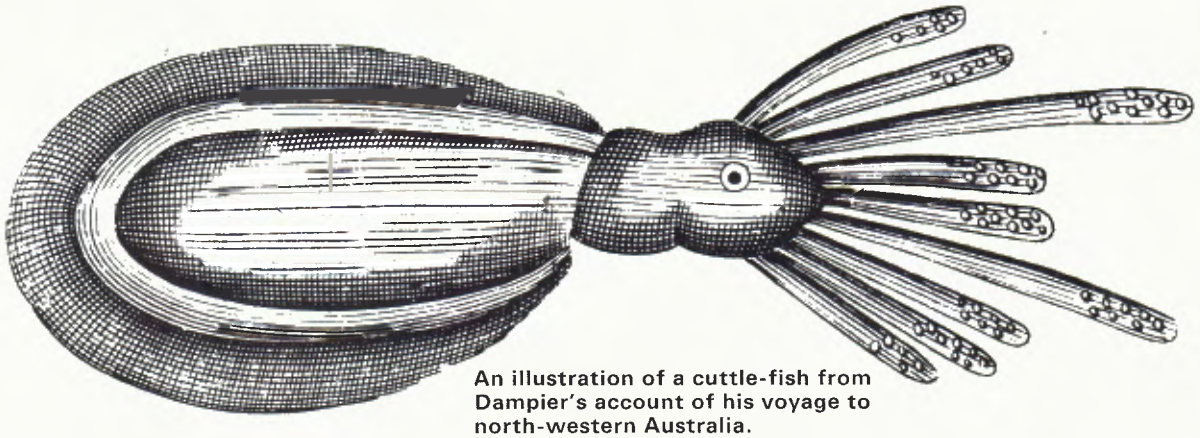
"It is of a round shape, and hath a thick, tough rind. When the Fruit is ripe, it is yellow and soft; and the taste is sweet and pleasant. The Natives use it for Bread: they gather it when full grown, while it is green and hard; then they bake it in an Oven, which scorcheth the rind and makes it black: but they scrape off the outside black crust, and there remains a tender thin crust, and the inside is soft, tender and white, like the Crumb of a Penny Loaf".

From Guam the *Cygnet* sailed on to Mindanao, in the Philippines. This time the buccaneers were so warmly welcomed by the natives that Swan wanted to stay and establish a trading post. But his crew were all for pushing on to the Spice Islands, and when Swan refused they left him ashore, elected John Read as their new captain, and sailed away. Dampier went with them, but against his will, hoping for an opportunity to desert. However, his chance never came.

After months of aimless cruising in the China Sea and the East Indies, the *Cygnet* was driven far south by a typhoon and on January 5 1688 she reached the north-west coast of Australia somewhere near to the present Buccaneer Archipelago.

National Portrait Gallery

A portrait of the English buccaneer and explorer, William Dampier (1652-1715), painted by T. Murray. Dampier was a daring pirate who plundered ships and fought hostile natives



An illustration of a cuttle-fish from Dampier's account of his voyage to north-western Australia. It was drawn by an artist who accompanied Dampier

Dampier went ashore in a boat and recorded his observations in a journal. His first impressions of this country were very dismal. "The Land is of a dry sandy soil, destitute of water, except you make Wells". He wasn't sure "whether it is an Island or a main Continent; but I am certain that it joins neither to *Asia*, *Africa* or *America*".

A bitter clash with natives

His impressions of the local inhabitants were equally bleak. "The Inhabitants of this Country are the Miserablest People in the world". He added that "They have great Bottle noses, pretty full lips, and wide mouths".

By the time the *Cygnet* put to sea again and headed north, Dampier was more determined than ever to leave his companions. Reluctantly they allowed him to go ashore on one of the Nicobar Islands. From here he reached Sumatra after a perilous voyage in an open boat, worked as chief gunner in the British fort at Benculen and eventually obtained a passage home in an East Indiaman.

On September 16 1691 Dampier reached England penniless, after an absence of 12 years. He spent the next five years re-writing his journal into book form and this was published in 1697 as *A New Voyage Round the World*. Within months it had gone into several editions and Dampier became famous and a public hero.

Because of his newly-won fame he was able to persuade the Admiralty to give him a ship and outfit him for a voyage of discovery. The ship was the *Roebuck*, 292 tons, which had long since seen its best days. Dampier's instructions were to explore as much as he could of New Holland, including its eastern coast.

With a crew of 50 he set sail on January 4 1699. He had trouble from the start, particularly with his first lieutenant, George Fisher, who objected to sailing under a former buccaneer. Eventually Dampier lost his temper, accused Fisher of fomenting a mutiny, thrashed him with a cane, confined him to his cabin in chains and put him ashore at Bahia, South America. There was no further talk of mutiny.

The *Roebuck* reached the west coast of New Holland on August 1 1699, and Dampier recorded in his journal what happened when he and some of his men went ashore to search for water.

"We went armed with muskets and cutlasses for our defence, expecting to see people there . . . When we came near the shore we saw three tall black naked men on the sandy bay ahead of us: but as we row'd in, they went away".

Dampier and his men tried to capture a native to find out where these primitive people got their water from but, instead of running away, the natives outflanked the visitors and began to throw spears at them. The fight was fierce and Dampier was forced "to charge again and shoot one of them".

He wounded the native but was forced to retreat when the other natives, with renewed fury, charged again. Dampier's companion, "who had been struck through the cheek by one of their lances, was afraid it had been poisoned" but this seemed unlikely.

Dampier and his men finally beat off the attackers and they did not return.

Dampier never reached the east coast of New Holland. Yet he did prove New Britain was an island by sailing through the strait which separates it from New Guinea and which is still called Dampier's Passage. But with a discontented, scurvy-ridden crew and a crumbling ship the odds against him were too high. On the way home he got as far as Ascension Island in the Atlantic, and there the *Roebuck* disintegrated and sank. Dampier and his crew were eventually picked up by a passing East Indiaman.

Back in England, Dampier had to face a court-martial on charges brought by Lieutenant Fisher. Dampier's plea of provocation was not accepted, and he was found guilty, fined all his pay for the past three years and declared unfit to ever again command a king's ship.

Dampier loses his reputation

Dampier again took to writing. The first of what was to be a two-volume account of *A Voyage to New Holland* appeared in 1703, but before he could complete the second part he was at sea again, this time as captain of the *St George*, a 26-gun privateer with a crew of 120. Instead of a salary he was to receive a share of all booty taken. His main object was to capture a Spanish treasure-ship which made a regular yearly voyage from the Philippines to Mexico with a cargo of silver and silks.

The voyage was disastrous. Dampier quarrelled constantly with his officers, he had little authority over his crew and he was accused of drunkenness, bullying and cowardice. Several Spanish prizes were taken but few yielded much of value, and although the treasure-ship was waylaid, she outgunned the *St George* and left her in a battered condition.

All but 27 of Dampier's crew mutinied and sailed off in another ship. Fortunately he and those who had stayed loyal managed to capture another ship. They transferred to this, scuttled the *St George* and returned to England by way of the East Indies, arriving late in 1707. An account of the voyage, written by the mate of the *St George*, stripped the last shreds from Dampier's reputation.

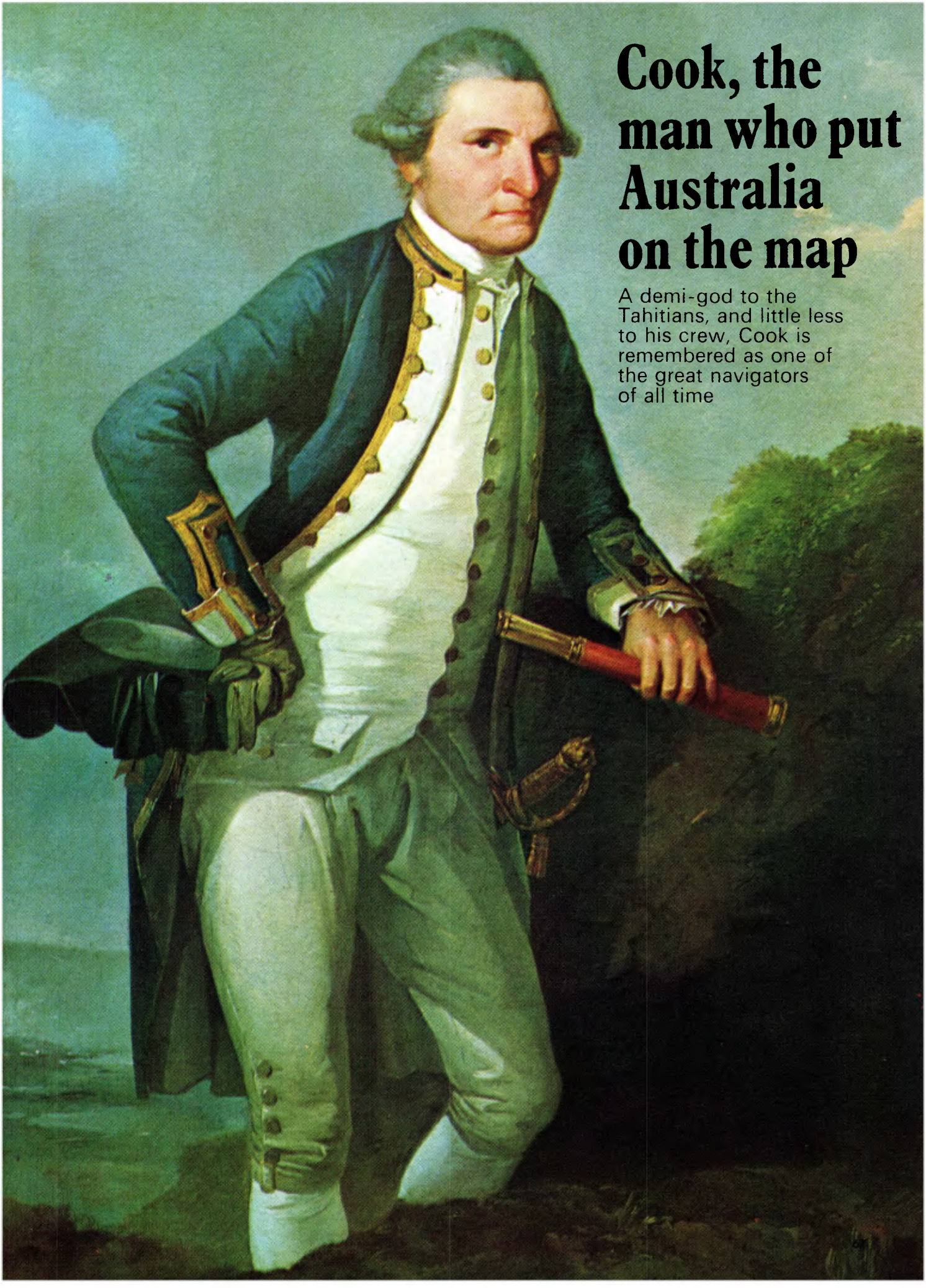
He completed the second part of his *Voyage to New Holland* which was published in 1709 but failed to go beyond a first edition. By the time it appeared Dampier was at sea again on what was to be his last voyage.

This time there were two ships, the *Duke* and *Duchess*, privateers sponsored by a group of Bristol merchants, and Dampier sailed as pilot and navigator. It was probably Dampier's happiest voyage, and a highly successful one in every way.

Several rich prizes, mostly Spanish but including a French ship, were taken; the town of Guayaquil in Ecuador was captured and plundered and its leading citizens held to ransom; and the ships returned home with booty which yielded a clear profit of £200,000.

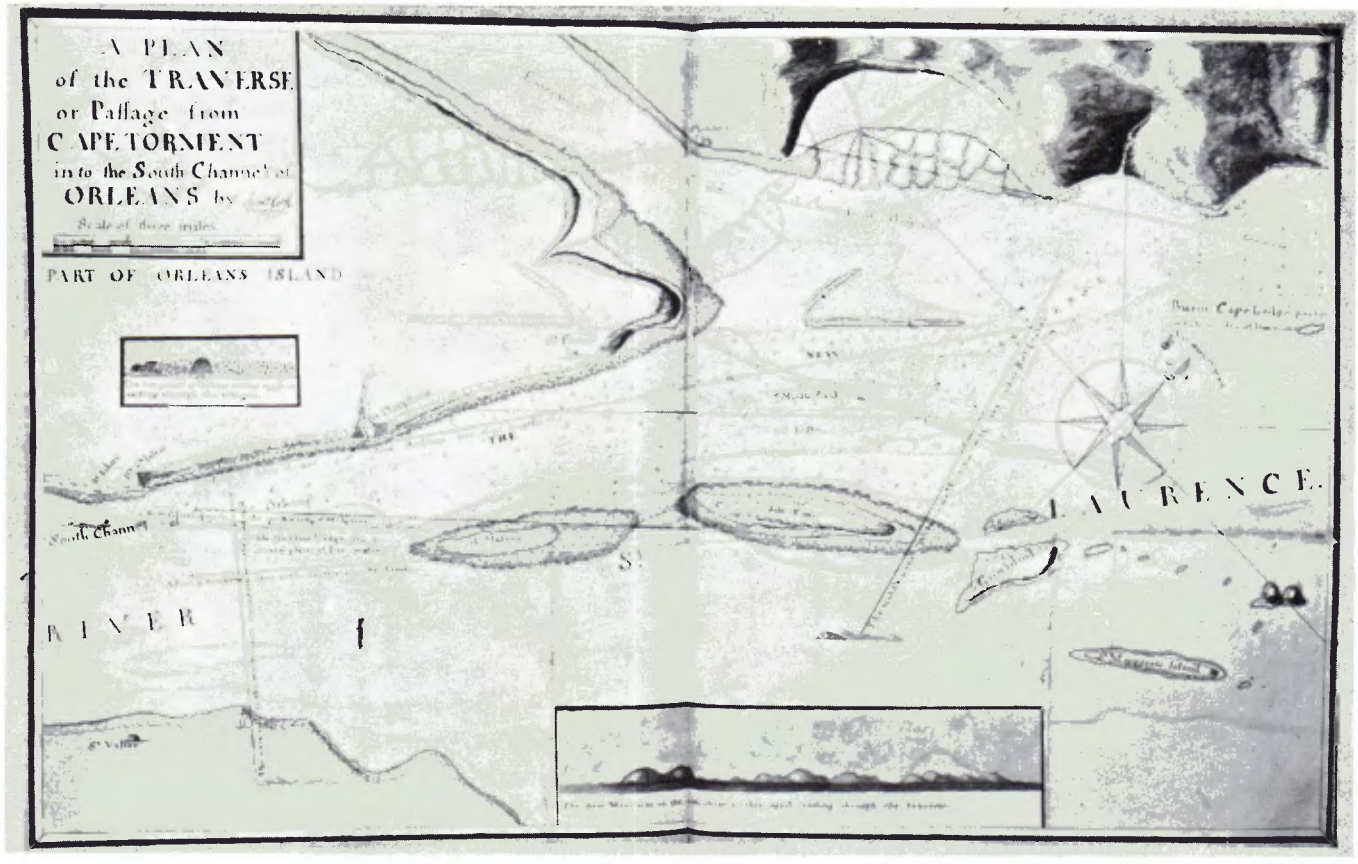
Today the voyage is remembered mainly because, in the course of it, the ships called at the island of Juan Fernandez, off the coast of Chile, and rescued a seaman named Alexander Selkirk who had been marooned there for four years. It was his experiences that inspired Daniel Defoe to write *Robinson Crusoe*.

Dampier was 60 when he returned to England, an old and forgotten man who had nevertheless rehabilitated himself by the excellence of his conduct throughout the voyage. His last years were spent quietly and fairly comfortably in London. He died in March 1715. It is not known where he was buried.



Cook, the man who put Australia on the map

A demi-god to the Tahitians, and little less to his crew, Cook is remembered as one of the great navigators of all time



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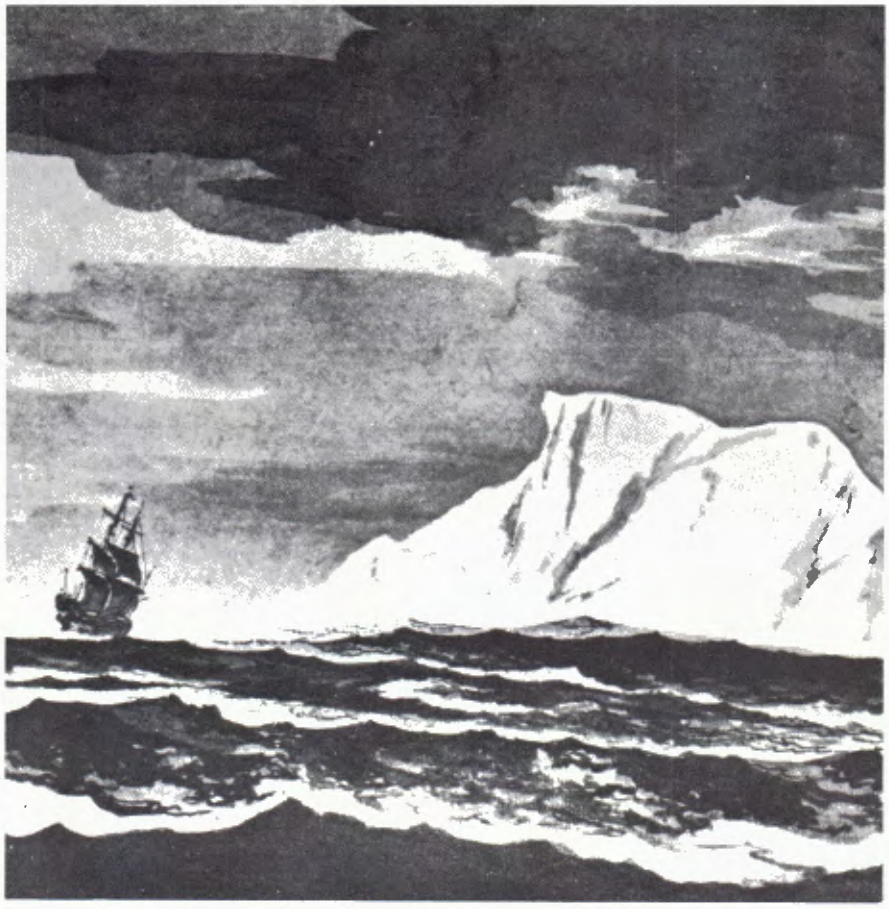

Mitchell Library

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The Public Archives of Canada

1 Cook's plan of the Traverse in the St Lawrence River. Because of his impeccably accurate draughtsmanship the British fleet was able safely to navigate the river prior to Woolf's assault on Quebec
2 Maoris and white men, seemingly at peace together, at Queen Charlotte's Sound, New Zealand, during Cook's third voyage. Aquatint by John Webber, the official artist of the expedition
3 The *Resolution* in turbulent seas, dwarfed in the shadow of a giant iceberg. Watercolour by William Hodges, a landscape painter of note and a friend of Cook
4 A pencil drawing of Omai attributed to Nathaniel Dance. Omai sailed from Tahiti in the *Adventure* and spent some time in England, where he was lionised by the nobility. Many portraits of him exist, including one by Sir Joshua Reynolds

To Australians Captain James Cook is the man who discovered and charted the east coast of their country and so paved the way for its settlement as a British colony. To Cook himself this was only one of his many achievements and not even his most important.

In three historic voyages between 1768 and 1779 Cook contributed more to geographical knowledge than any man before or since.

He disproved the existence of a great southern continent, thought to exist as a balance to the land masses of the north. He discovered and charted much of the Pacific from the west coast of Canada to New Caledonia. He re-examined and accurately located many Pacific Islands that had been discovered by earlier explorers. And by sailing around New Zealand he proved that it comprised two large islands.

Even this was only part of Cook's achievement. In addition he revolutionised the science of navigation and showed how scurvy could be conquered; and the published accounts of his voyages taken from his remarkable journals provided scholars with invaluable information about the peoples of the Pacific and their ways of life, and about the area's fauna and flora.

It is amazing that such a stupendous amount could have been accomplished by any one man, and particularly by a man who began life with no advantages at all save his own intelligence and will to succeed. Cook's father was a humble farm-labourer who had migrated south from Scotland, and as far as is known his mother's background was equally modest.

Cook was born on October 27 1728 at Marton, a village in the north-eastern corner of Yorkshire. While still a small boy he moved with his family to Great Ayton, a larger village, where his father had been appointed bailiff of a farm. After a few years of elementary schooling he worked for some time with his father. Then at the age of 17 he was indentured to a grocer and haberdasher in the fishing village of Staithes. Here, in daily contact with ships and seamen, young Cook soon decided on a seafaring life and moved south a few miles to the port of Whitby, where he became apprenticed to John and Henry Walker, shipowners.

For some years Cook served in colliers trading between Whitby and London, with occasional voyages to other ports. Between times he lived with his employers, who were Quakers, and was encouraged by them to study mathematics, astronomy and navigation and to fill in other gaps in his general education. He so quickly proved his worth as a practical seaman that at the age of 23 he became a mate of the collier *Friendship*, and three years later, early in 1755, he was offered command of the same ship. It was a flattering invitation, but Cook turned it down. Instead on June 17 he enlisted in the Navy as an ordinary seaman.

There have been many theories to explain this surprising move, but Cook's motive seems clear enough. England and France were on the brink of what was to become the Seven Years' War; and in wartime, as he well knew, he would have opportunities of promotion in the Navy that would never otherwise come his way.

The elusive southern continent

Within a month he had been promoted to master's mate and in 1757, on his 29th birthday, he became master of *HMS Pembroke* (64 guns). Soon afterwards he sailed for service in North America. By this time with the encouragement of two captains under whom he had served, Hugh Palliser and John Simcoe, he had become a highly skilled navigator, marine surveyor and cartographer.

As a prelude to a British attack on Quebec, Cook was detailed to chart the St Lawrence River, from which the French had removed all navigational marks. He did his job so well that more than 200 British ships were able to negotiate the river without a single casualty. Three months later Quebec fell and French resistance collapsed.

Instead of returning at once to England Cook stayed on to complete his charting of the river and to survey part of the coast of Newfoundland; and in the next

six years he went back to Canada each summer to carry out further coastal surveys, mostly as captain of the schooner *Grenville*. Meanwhile, during a visit to London, he had married Elizabeth Batts, and by 1766 was the father of two sons and a daughter.

Cook's reputation was now high in naval circles, and in 1767 he came under the notice of men of science when his account of an eclipse of the sun which he had observed off the coast of Newfoundland was published by the Royal Society.

In the same year the Society successfully petitioned King George III to finance a voyage to the South Seas to observe the transit of the planet Venus across the face of the sun. The story of Cook's appointment to the command of this expedition and of his historic voyage in the *Endeavour* is told elsewhere. It was one of the most successful voyages in history, and when Cook returned to England in July 1771 he was hailed as a hero.

On Admiralty instructions Cook had spent some time looking for a southern continent. Although he was personally sceptical, some geographers still insisted on its existence. There was only one way to settle the matter, and within weeks of his return Cook – who had been promoted to commander – was ordered to set out again and to sail right round the world in high southern latitudes, so that if there were such a continent he could not fail to find it.

This time he was given two ships – the *Resolution* (462 tons) and the *Adventure* (336 tons), both Whitby-built barks of the same type as the *Endeavour*. The wealthy young naturalist Joseph Banks who had sailed with him in the *Endeavour* was eager to do so again, but his demands for cabin space for his party and for authority regarding sailing routes and ports of call were not acceptable to the Admiralty. After some bitter argument he withdrew from the expedition.

The ships left England on July 13 1772 and from Cape Town plunged south towards the Antarctic. For six weeks, in sub-zero weather and in hourly peril from icebergs, Cook searched vainly for land which a French captain, Bouvet, claimed to have seen in the area. Then he gave up and pushed farther south until, in January 1773, his ships became the first in history to cross the Antarctic Circle. Forced back by impenetrable pack ice, they soon afterwards lost each other in thick fog and headed separately for a prearranged rendezvous at Queen Charlotte's Sound, New Zealand.

On the way the *Adventure* stopped briefly in Van Diemen's Land, which her captain, Tobias Furneaux, believed wrongly to be part of the Australian mainland, and the *Resolution* spent six weeks in Dusky Bay, New Zealand.

Furneaux had hoped to winter in Queen Charlotte's Sound, but Cook was no man to waste six months. Three weeks after the ships had rejoined company they were at sea again, this time heading northeast into the Pacific. Some pleasant weeks were spent at Tahiti, and there was a brief call at a group of islands discovered by the Dutch navigator Tasman which, because of the affability of the natives, Cook renamed the Friendly Islands and which today form the kingdom of Tonga.

Cook's last voyage of discovery

In rough weather off New Zealand the ships became separated again. Cook waited for three weeks in Queen Charlotte's Sound, then left a message for Furneaux and set out for another summer plunge into the Antarctic. This time the *Resolution* twice crossed the Atlantic Circle before solid pack ice drove her north again. During the next six months Cook made calls at Tahiti and the Friendly Islands; examined Easter Island, the Marquesas Group and the New Hebrides, which earlier discoverers had located incorrectly in their charts; and discovered New Caledonia and Norfolk Island.

After another pause for repairs at Queen Charlotte's Sound, the *Resolution* set out on her third and final search for the supposed continent. East of Cape Horn Cook found a few bleak, ice-bound islands, but that was all. Within another few weeks he had completed his encirclement of the globe and had proved conclusively that if a continent existed it must be so

far south as not to justify exploration.

On his return to England in July 1775 there were more honours for Cook, including promotion to post-captain, an interview with the king, and a gold medal from the Royal Society for a paper he wrote on the prevention of scurvy. He was given a soft billet ashore and everyone assumed his seafaring days were over.

But Cook was too restless to accept retirement, and on July 12 1776, again in the *Resolution*, he sailed on his third, and what was to be his last, great voyage. Its immediate purpose was to return to his home a Tahitian named Omai whom Furneaux had brought to England and who had been a great success with the nobility. After that Cook was ordered to search for a navigable passage around the north of America to link the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

At Cape Town Cook was joined by an old shipmate, Captain Charles Clerke, in the *Discovery* (298 tons). On their way to the Pacific the ships spent several days in Adventure Bay, Van Diemen's Land, and Cook got to know some of the local Aborigines. Some islands of what are now the Cook Group were discovered, and three leisurely months were spent exploring and charting the Friendly Islands. Here it was learned that there were two more large island groups, Fiji and Samoa, within easy sail, but to the surprise of his officers Cook made no attempt to examine them.

Omai was duly delivered home, and in December 1777 the ships sailed north from the Society Group into unknown waters.

A month later Cook made one of his most important discoveries – a group of large, high islands which he named after Lord Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, and which are now the Hawaiian Islands. Cook had always been treated with respect by the various native peoples. Here he was treated almost as a god.

Sailing north-east the ships reached the American mainland coast off the present State of Oregon, and some weeks were spent in Nootka Sound, on what is now Vancouver Island. They continued up the Canadian coast to Alaska, and then headed north again through Bering Strait in search of the so-called North West Passage. All attempts to break through the thick pack ice failed, and as the season was now too late for any chance of success Cook gave up and sailed south, meaning to winter in the Sandwich Islands and try again next summer.

On January 16 1779 when the ships anchored in Kealakekua Bay, on the main island of Hawaii, they were received rapturously by thousands of natives. Cook was treated with even greater adoration than before, for by now he was thought to be a reincarnation of their god of peace and happiness, Lono. There was much feasting and celebration, but the natives soon tired of having to feed 200 hungry visitors and there were sighs of relief when the ships sailed after a stay of three weeks.

Four days later the *Resolution's* foremast was badly damaged in a gale, and Cook was forced to return. This time he and his men were far from welcome. Within a few days the natives became insolent and aggressive, and on February 14 a series of brazen thefts culminated in the stealing of the *Discovery's* cutter.

The Murder of Cook on Sunday February 14 1779 at Kealakekua Bay, Hawaii. An aquatint by John Cleveley. Cook was sacrificed by the ignorance of the Hawaiian priests, who had made of him a living god and then, realising their mistake, had sought to prove him mortal in the eyes of their people by killing him

National Maritime Museum

John Webber's impression of natives dancing at Tongatabu (Tonga). The friendliness of the natives and the extravagant entertainments tempted Cook to linger there on his third voyage

Following a plan that had worked many times before, Cook went ashore with some marines, meaning to take the king and hold him as hostage until the cutter was returned. The king, who knew nothing of the theft, seemed willing enough but his followers objected strongly, and soon Cook and his party were surrounded by hundreds of shouting, protesting natives.

Anger suddenly flared into violence. Stones were thrown and shots fired. As Cook turned to call his boats closer in he was struck from behind and knocked down, and as he struggled to rise scores of natives buried their daggers into his body. With him died four of his marines.

The following summer Clerke, now in charge of the expedition, again tried and failed to find a north-west passage. He died of tuberculosis on the way home, perhaps in his own quiet way as great a hero as his leader.

It is often said that Cook's personality has been so overshadowed by his achievements that little is known of him as a man. Yet much can be learned of the sort of person he was from the writings of those who knew him, and particularly from his own journals.

In general he emerges as a quiet, modest, sincere man, but with few close friends. Ambition was the driving force of his life, yet he never advanced himself at the expense of others. He was quick-tempered but bore no grudges and was not impatient of the faults of others.

He was a strict disciplinarian when the occasion demanded it, but most of the time he was remarkably tolerant and his punishments were always mild. He had a great feeling for the various native peoples he met, and they respected and loved him. He was not particularly religious, and in a tight corner he was apt to put more faith in his own ability than in the aid of Providence.

Cook was a tall, lean, spare man, moderate in all things and hardly aware of physical discomfort. Usually he was reserved and not given to small talk, but he could converse well and animatedly when he chose. He treated his men humanely and well, and they admired and loved him and looked on him as a sort of father-figure.

"He was our leading star", one wrote, "who at its setting left us involved in darkness and despair". Of no man could more be said.

The sailor-farmer who became first governor

The gigantic problems of founding the NSW colony were entrusted, in spite of opposition, to a little-known naval captain. Yet Phillip proved to be one of the most able governors, cool in emergencies and farsighted

Arthur Phillip was the most widely respected and least criticised of all the early governors of New South Wales. The authorities who drew up the plans for the establishment of a penal colony in Australia are often accused of having exercised little care and foresight, but in choosing Phillip as the first governor they took a step which proved to be the wisest that could possibly have been made.

At the time of his appointment Phillip was a little-known naval captain engaged in survey work for the British Admiralty. He had been born in London on October 11 1738, the second child of a language teacher of German origin. His mother had at one time been married to a naval captain, which may explain why in June 1751 he was enrolled on "the establishment of poor boys" at Greenwich Hospital, a training school for the sons of seamen. Here he began an arduous apprenticeship for the merchant marine which culminated in two years' service at sea under Captain Redhead in the *Fortune*.

In 1755 he transferred to the Royal Navy. The position he occupied, that of "captain's servant" aboard *HMS Buckingham*, was lowly, but it was a recognised first step for those wishing to become officers. The moment was opportune, for within a year the Seven Years' War had broken out and the navy, after a period of peacetime inactivity, came into its own.

On May 20 1756 Phillip saw action for the first time when his ship joined the fleet in an indecisive engagement against the French off Minorca. This was so mismanaged by the British commander, Vice-Admiral Byng, that he was court martialled and shot.

Four more years were to elapse before Phillip again saw action, this time off the West Indies. By then, having served on a succession of ships, he had gradually been promoted, reaching in 1760 the rank of temporary lieutenant aboard the *Stirling Castle*. It was for distinguishing himself on this vessel in an attack on Havana in August 1762, aimed at severing Spain from her western empire, that his lieutenancy was made permanent. Less than a year later peace was signed and Phillip spent most of the next 12 years in enforced retirement on half-pay.

Arthur Phillip wearing captain's undress uniform, a portrait believed to have been painted on his appointment as Governor. The scene may anticipate his arrival in Australia, but it is of neither Botany Bay nor Sydney Harbour. Painted by Francis Wheatley in 1786

Half-pay and broken marriage

At that time the half-pay of a naval lieutenant ranged from three to five shillings a day, according to seniority. To supplement his meagre salary he acquired property at Lyndhurst in Hampshire and there he settled with his newly-wed wife Margaret, the widow of a prosperous London merchant. His experiences as a landowner were to stand him in good stead in later years, when, as Governor of New South Wales, he established a government farm to raise food for the convicts. It was an especially valuable experience since few in the colony had an agricultural background.

Phillip derived another advantage from living in the Lyndhurst area. A near neighbour was Sir George Rose, Treasurer of the Navy, who is widely thought to have been responsible for securing the governorship for Phillip. Certainly he must have had many opportunities to study Phillip's character and talents, and it is certain also that Phillip was not intimately acquainted with anyone else of note or influence – indeed, the British Home Secretary, Lord Sydney, was later to admit in a letter that "little was known of the actual reasons for Phillip's appointment".

These developments lay in the unknown future. As matters stood the retired lieutenant could not have seen life at Lyndhurst as a stepping-stone in his career. Eighteenth century provincial life had many attractions, but it would not have been other than irksome to one of Phillip's active disposition. Nor did there seem much prospect of action in the immediate future, for Europe appeared securely at peace.

To add to his difficulties his marriage had not proved happy and by 1769 he and his wife had separated. There is no record of the cause of this breach, but the arrangements must have been amicably agreed to, for, despite his wife's protests, Phillip insisted on repaying her such of her fortune as he had spent, although it had gone "principally in domestic disbursements" – a refined principle of honour, but one which could only have added financial worries to his

Governor Phillip wounded in the shoulder by a spear at Manly Cove, a watercolour by a contemporary but anonymous artist. Phillip appears slightly to the left of the open boat. The figure beside him is that of Mr Waterhouse, who is "endeavouring to break the spear"

other burdensome and vexatious anxieties.

Accordingly, he grasped the first opportunity that came his way. When Portugal, a traditional friend of Britain, became involved in war with Spain in 1774, Phillip sought and was granted permission by the Admiralty to enlist as a captain in the Portuguese navy. He served until September 18 1778, earning the admiration and respect of the Portuguese authorities. "This officer is intelligent and active", reported the Portuguese naval commander-in-chief, "and shews that he has been reared as a soldier; he is a little headstrong, but can easily be brought to reason". And again, the Marquez do Lavradio, reporting from Rio de Janeiro, observed: "This officer is both honourable and meritorious . . . is no flatterer, saying what he thinks but without temper or want of respect". In an earlier report he had struck an equally flattering but somewhat ominous note: "His (Phillip's) health is very delicate, but he never complains, excepting when he has nothing special to do for the Royal Service".

Phillip gained valuable experience during his service with the Portuguese navy when he was ordered to transport from Lisbon to the Brazils some 400 convicts. During the voyage an epidemic so depleted his crew that he had insufficient hands to navigate his ship. Accordingly, with a resolution and courage that he was so often to display, he summoned to him "the most spirited of the convicts", explained the position to them, and gave his word that if they would help to work the vessel, he, on his return to Lisbon, would do all in his power to have their sentences mitigated. The prisoners agreed; the ship was brought safely to port, and Phillip urged their case with such energy and resolve that the convicts were not only emancipated but were also granted small tracts of land in South America.

Upon leaving the Portuguese navy, Phillip was almost immediately appointed first lieutenant on *HMS Alexander*, for Great Britain was now at war with her American colonists and their allies. During the period of hostilities, which lasted until 1784, Phillip saw little action but was nevertheless given command first of the 24-gun *Ariadne* and then the 64-gun *Europe*.

These years also saw him strengthen his friendship with two colleagues who were to accompany him to New South Wales. The more important of the two was Philip Gidley King who sailed with the Governor in the First Fleet, was later appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Norfolk Island on Phillip's recommendation, and between 1800 and 1806 was in charge of New South Wales – a position he would have occupied some time earlier had Phillip had his way.

Another sailor whose interests he looked after was his former steward, Henry Brewer, who followed him from ship to ship, rising to the position of purser on the *Europe* and eventually becoming Provost-Marshal of New South Wales. Phillip could inspire, as well as display, loyalty.

Chosen to rule NSW

With the return of peace Phillip was again temporarily retired on half-pay. However, the great opportunity of his life was at hand. The victory of the American colonists, by closing the Americas to British convicts, set in train a series of events leading eventually to the selection of Botany Bay as the site for a new penal colony and the choice of Phillip to command it.

Why he was prepared to abandon the seafaring life for a civil post is not entirely certain. On the face of it there seemed to be little attraction in acting virtually as head jailer of a distant and primitive penal settlement. Yet Phillip was a man of vision, almost alone in seeing that New South Wales could become a valuable addition to the British Empire. The challenge of laying the foundations of such a development offered more scope to a man of his temperament than did the navy, which at that time could provide him with nothing more exciting than survey work.

Perhaps even Phillip could not appreciate the problems with which he was to be faced, for never before in the history of British colonisation had an enterprise of such magnitude been attempted. He had to deal not only with the convicts, many if not most of whom were tough, violent and rebellious, but also with the Aborigines. With the latter he dealt justly but firmly. On one occasion when two convict rush cutters had been discovered murdered, presumably by

British Museum (Nat. Hist.)

National Maritime Museum/Greenwich Hospital Coll.

1

National Portrait Gallery

2

1 HMS Buckingham in the final stages of construction at Deptford, London, a painting by John Cleveley the Elder.
It was in this warship that Phillip began his naval career in the lowly position of "captain's servant".
The *Buckingham* was a third-rater (there were six rates of warship, of which this was the commonest) and carried about 70 guns
2 Sir George Rose, a portrait by Sir William Beechey, 1802.
Rose, Treasurer of the Navy, was Phillip's neighbour in Hampshire and was influential in securing Phillip's appointment as Governor of NSW

Aborigines, Phillip at once set out with a party of 12, resolved to seize and punish the culprits. Suddenly they came upon a crowd of Aborigines, numbering about 300, of which 212 were men. This could have been no very agreeable experience, but Phillip, wholly undismayed, soon established friendly relations with them. Although no information was obtained on that occasion, Phillip persevered. Not only did he offer "the most tempting of all rewards, a state of freedom" to any convict who could point out to him the murderers, but he took the opportunity to institute the most vigorous enquiry to ascertain whether any of the convicts for their part had ever ill-treated any of the natives. Indeed, his relations with the Aborigines were always of the best, for he took great pains to know and understand them. Benelong Point is named after his favourite Aboriginal whose camp was at that place, and who used on occasion to dine with Governor Phillip.

Often, too, he had to bear with the quarrelsome conduct of his subordinates. None caused him more concern than the testy Major Ross, Commandant of the Marines, who frequently disobeyed the Governor and truculently refused to allow his men to superintend convict working parties. Ross would dispute even the most trivial of matters, once flying into a rage over the work which a single convict, one James Thady, had been put to. He made an intemperate demand to Phillip for absolute definitions of his status as Lieutenant-Governor, to which Phillip wrote in weary answer, "I have, sir, only to wish that the peace of the settlement may not be disturbed". It is understandable that if Phillip had one fault as Governor it was to keep his thoughts and plans largely to himself, discussing them only with his tried and loyal friend Collins, the Judge-Advocate.

The overriding problem, however, was how to feed his people. Although he attacked the problem with the greatest energy, he lacked qualified men and adequate resources to work the land and by early 1790 famine, as Watkin Tench, one of several First Fleet historians, wrote, "was approaching with gigantic strides".

Phillip did not avail himself of privileges which might have been his as governor – indeed, colonists who dined with him during this anxious period were expected to bring their own bread with them. In addition he gave up three hundredweight of flour which was his personal property, declaring that he did not wish to see at his table more than the ration which was received by all from the public store – a proper resolution to which he rigidly adhered.

To all these problems must be added another: his persistent ill-health. Frequently he suffered from "the complaint which was then so general" – either scurvy or dysentery – and had a continual pain in his side, which medical men today suggest from the symptoms may have been due to a stone in the kidney or to a hernia. Yet he never complained. "Though his countenance too plainly indicated the torture he endured", wrote surgeon White, "he took every method in his power to conceal it . . .". Moreover, he endured his full measure of the mishaps that attended all the early settlers. He once suffered a severe fall into a concealed hollow in the ground, which compelled him to rest for some weeks; and on another occasion, while trying to make friends with some Aborigines, he received a spear in his shoulder. After nearly five years in office this kindly, dedicated and sensitive man was worn out by physical and mental strain.

From the standpoint of Australian history Phillip's years in New South Wales were the most significant of his life. From his own point of view, however, they formed only a small part of a long and distinguished career, devoted principally to the navy. He left the colony on December 11 1792 to seek attention in England for "the pain in his side", intending to return once his health was restored. However, on medical advice he was obliged to resign.

19, Bennett Street, Bath. It was here that Arthur Phillip spent his declining years, largely ignored by government and public, but happy with his second wife, Isabella

Darby photo ser.

Last years of service

In 1796 he was fit enough to return to sea, and during the next two years he was successively commander of several warships. His last appointment, to the 99-gun *Blenheim*, was his least happy, for shortly after he took command a senior officer, Rear-Admiral Frederick, insisted on hoisting his flag in that ship. Phillip, thus abruptly superseded, returned to England a disappointed man. Had he not transferred to the *Blenheim*, but instead remained on his previous ship, the *Swiftsure*, he would have participated a few months later in Nelson's great victory at the Battle of the Nile.

Phillip's remaining years in the navy from 1798 until 1805 were spent ashore on a task ideally suited to a man of his administrative gifts. Since 1793 England had been at war with revolutionary France, whose victories on the European continent had enabled her to regain an ascendancy which she had not enjoyed since the days of Louis XIV. Fears grew of a possible invasion and measures for defence became necessary, particularly after the advent to power of Napoleon. In 1798 an organisation known as the Sea Fencibles, comprising fishermen and others with knowledge of the sea, was formed to assist in the defence of the coast. Phillip was placed in command, first of the Hampshire force, and then, in 1799, of the entire organisation.

He spent his closing years with his second wife, Isabella, living comfortably in the pleasant and elegant surroundings of Bath. He died on August 31 1814, shortly after being raised to the rank of admiral. Malicious rumour suggested that he had committed suicide, but there is no evidence to support this. He had long suffered from ill-health, and as far back as 1808, on a cold day in February, he had suffered a paralytic stroke.

The funeral cortège to the little church of St Nicholas at Bathampton consisted only of coach and carriage, with a few intimate friends in attendance. Apparently only the vicar and his assistants awaited in the church the remains of the founder of Australia.